

Genesis 3:15

“Dust of Our Dust”

The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Vigil

March 30, 2024

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“The LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, ... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel’” (Genesis 3:14a, 15).

We should all speak well of the dead. It is obvious that we rejoice with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are with Christ in the Church Triumphant. But what about even the most vile of mankind, you know, those of the likes of Hitler, Lenin and Stalin, Pol Pot, and Chairman Mao? Well, as Christians, we should strive to speak well of them, too.

You see, there is no joy in their deaths – *or any death*, for we belong to Jesus Christ, and He takes no pleasure in the death of sinners. So, no matter how badly we have been mistreated or abused, no matter what vile people have done to us or to those we love, we ought to recognize that they are just as human as you and me. For those who die apart from Christ, they go where there is no joy and where punishment is both just and eternal.

So, how could we joy in that? How could we be glad when we know it is unnecessary, when we know that Jesus loved them and gave His life for them, that He longed to gather them to Himself in perfect grace?

Our Lord has ***not*** called us to vengeance. He has ***not*** called us to enact retribution. No, our Lord has called us to compassion and mercy. We are to love our enemies. So whether a “good person” dies or a “bad person” dies, that person is still a person. And even when evil people meet their end, we should respond in humility and in fear and speak well of them, too. For barring the return of our Lord Jesus Christ first, we shall all die the common death of mankind.

In any case, the sorrow and demise of our enemies cannot bring us joy or even gladness. Only repentance and faith in Christ can do that. As fellow redeemed in Christ, our desire is never that anyone be damned. Rather, it is the same desire of our Lord, that all mankind would turn and receive His forgiveness and be saved from the power of sin, death, and the devil.

But... But there is one exception. There is one for whom we hold no respect. Who could this be? Take a second and think. It's Satan; aka: the devil, Lucifer, "the Father of Lies." We renounce him, his works, and his ways.

Yesterday, the Lamb was slain. But we do not mourn for Him. He is not dead. He is risen! Jesus lives! ***Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!***

The doorposts of our hearts have been sprinkled with His blood, which Christ poured down our throats, and the destroying angel with his sacrificial knife, fearful and terrifying, has passed over us. We are safe. We are protected by the holy, precious blood of our living Savior Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us.

So, tonight on this evening of Easter Vigil, hell mourns while we dance on the devil's grave.

Our piety has no sympathy, no compassion for the worst of all tyrants who held us for so long in bondage, who deceived Eve, who has tormented us through the years with lies and temptations, who is responsible for all the evil known to mankind. We have no respect, no humility, no fear, no sorrow at his destruction. We rejoice that Satan's power over those in Christ is no more.

So, let us hoist the crushed head of the serpent upon a stick and place it at the city gate! Let all of Satan's demons know that they have lost. They are done. They have no power. Our Redeemer lives, and we are now marked with His blood. The power of hell cannot harm us. Jesus has routed the last enemy and absorbed death's sting. He has stolen the grave's victory. He has overcome. He has won the day. He has restored creation. Jesus trounced Satan.

For us in Christ, Satan's accusations against you have been silenced. You are clean. You are free. You are innocent. Your sins are forgiven. It was God the Father's will to save you, and now it is done. The powers of sin, death, and Satan have met their end, because Jesus lives! ***Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!***

The serpent has met his end. His skull is crushed. He can't get up. He is as dead as death. We are free. We are alive. And our joy is before us, for Jesus, our Redeemer lives. His tomb is empty. His soul returned to the dust of Eve. He rose from the dead and has paved our way to life everlasting with His bodily ascension into heaven.

This is the very purpose for which Jesus joined Himself to our dust, to our death, to our demise, in the Virgin's womb. He came to be our substitute, to take our place, to do what Adam should have done but did not.

By the death of Jesus, "*ashes to ashes and dust to dust*" now means only that we follow Jesus. For He is dust of our dust, bone of our bones, ash of our ashes. When we return to dust and rest in the womb of the earth, this is simply passing through death to Jesus for us who trust in Him.

God joins us to Himself when the good work He has begun is complete through yours and my death. By His death and bodily resurrection, Christ has paved your way to paradise. He has ascended to His Father to bring you heaven.

The power of sin, death, and the devil are no more. Our evil foes have been banished. All wickedness is put to flight. God and man is reconciled in Christ!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +